



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

VALERIE ERVIN
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 5

Memorandum

Date: April 3, 2013

To: Nancy Navarro, Council President
Steve Farber, Council Staff Director

From: Valerie Ervin, Councilmember
Nancy Floreen, Councilmember

Re: Request for Independent Industry Expert to Advise Council on Silver Spring
Transit Center

As you know, yesterday the Council approved an additional \$7.5 million for legal and engineering consultant fees and staff charges associated with the construction delays that have occurred over the last year for the Paul Sarbanes Transit Center project in Silver Spring. This appropriation was necessary to reimburse providers for work already approved by the executive branch.

While we recognize that this funding was necessary to keep the project moving forward, we expressed serious concerns about the ongoing budget impact of the continuing delays and cost overruns associated with this project. Since 2008, \$41 million has been added to the cost of the Silver Spring Transit Center. These cost increases were linked to numerous change orders, increased material costs, permitting and utility approval delays, and site improvements.

The County has received more than \$53 million in federal aid and over \$14 million in state aid for this project. The total cost of the Silver Spring Transit Center is currently projected at more than \$109 million. With more than 57,000 patrons and 1,250 bus trips per day, the Silver Spring Transit Center is one of the largest transportation hubs in the region and ridership is expected to grow to 97,000 in 2024.

In addition, On March 19, the County Executive and his team informed us that residents will continue to face the ongoing transportation burdens associated with the construction and repair of the Silver Spring Transit Center for an undetermined amount of time because there is still no firm date for opening. This information was shared at a Council briefing related to the release of a report from KCE Structural Engineers who reviewed the design and construction and conducted an inspection of the entire structure. KCE found a variety of problems associated with the design, construction, and concrete strength.

We need to move forward with appropriate remediation efforts to correct the problems identified, so we can get our residents moving again. Residents, who are understandably fed up with the difficulties accessing the Metro in Silver Spring, are going to other stations, which not only inconveniences our residents but negatively impacts the bottom line for businesses in and around Silver Spring and hampers economic development.

While we appreciate the series of regular updates you requested from the County Executive and his team about this project, we would also like an independent evaluation of the information that has been and will be provided to the Council.

We are requesting that the Council retain an independent industry expert who can advise Councilmembers as we move forward. We believe that the complexity and scale of this project and the types of issues identified requires additional independent analysis that goes beyond the level of expertise we currently have on staff.

None of us are structural engineers or construction experts and Councilmembers need to ensure that the remediation proposals we receive will achieve a safe, functional transit center for our residents in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible.

Thank you for considering this request, and we would be happy to discuss this request with you in greater detail.